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SPECIAL COMMITTEE AGAINST APARTHEID

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 655th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 18 February 1992 at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. GAMBARI (Nigeria)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

2. The CHAIRMAN welcomed the Secretary-General to the meeting and said that his presence illustrated the great importance he attached to the speedy eradication of apartheid and testified to his personal commitment and dedication to the just cause of the South African people in its efforts to achieve freedom and justice.

ELECTION OF THE BUREAU OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

3. The CHAIRMAN proposed that, at the current meeting, owing to circumstances of which members were aware, the Special Committee should elect a chairman, one vice-chairman and a rapporteur, and defer the election of the remaining two vice-chairmen to a later date.

4. It was so decided.

5. Mr. DANKWA (Ghana) welcomed the presence of the Secretary-General, which testified to his commitment to peace and justice in South Africa. Although the recent significant developments had raised hopes for a peaceful and negotiated settlement to the apartheid problem, much remained to be done. In keeping with its role in the vanguard of the anti-apartheid struggle, the Special Committee must do all in its power to achieve a non-racial, democratic South Africa, in accordance with the General Assembly resolutions on the subject. With that in view, the Special Committee needed effective, discerning leadership and he therefore proposed that Mr. Gambari (Nigeria) should be re-elected Chairman of the Special Committee, that Mr. Acharya (Nepal) should be re-elected Vice-Chairman, and that Mr. Goel (India) should be re-elected Rapporteur.

6. Mr. RAZALI (Malaysia) said he had been heartened by the recent developments in South Africa. Events were now at a critical juncture and national and international efforts to achieve a solution were coinciding. The Special Committee had an impressive record as a focus for multilateral pressure for change in South Africa and, given the significant contribution already made by the delegates nominated by the representative of Ghana, he wished to second those nominations.

7. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Special Committee wished to re-elect him as Chairman, Mr. Acharya (Nepal) as Vice-Chairman, and Mr. Goel (India) as Rapporteur, it being understood that the two remaining vice-chairmen would be elected at the next meeting.

8. It was so decided.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMEN OF THE SUBCOMMITTEES

9. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the two Subcommittees should be maintained and that Mr. Awoonor (Ghana) should be re-elected Chairman of the Subcommittee on the Implementation of the United Nations Resolutions on South Africa and that Mr. Mumbengegwi (Zimbabwe) should be re-elected Chairman of the Subcommittee on Developments in South Africa. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Special Committee agreed to that proposal.

10. It was so decided.

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

11. The SECRETARY-GENERAL said that throughout the years he had followed the situation in South Africa with deep interest. The commitment of the United Nations to seek an end to apartheid and witness the birth of a democratic country, ably advocated by the Special Committee, had contributed to the developments now under way.

12. The Special Committee had played an important role in stirring the conscience of the international community and the consensus which it had helped forge recently in the General Assembly had given further momentum to that role.

13. The system of apartheid in South Africa, which had rightly been on the agenda of the United Nations for many years, was crumbling under the combined pressure of internal and external forces. It was now possible to envisage a new society in South Africa - a society which respected human rights and did not discriminate on grounds of colour, sex, political affiliation or religion, an undivided society in which economic wealth and opportunity were shared by all.

14. It was those principles, underpinning the United Nations Declaration on Apartheid approved by consensus in 1989, which constituted the international community's blueprint for the future of South Africa. It should be a source of satisfaction to everyone that negotiations towards a new constitution in South Africa were finally under way, in line with the proposals and guidelines set out in the Declaration.

15. Courageous political steps had been taken in South Africa in the past two years. The repeal of major apartheid laws and the beginning of the repatriation of exiles had facilitated the start of the current negotiations. The launching of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) had marked a new stage in the political life of the country, as concerned parties began the gradual process towards national reconciliation and agreement on a democratic constitution.

16. The presence of the United Nations at the Convention in December 1991 had made it clear that the Organization fully supported that process. The inclusion of all parties concerned in the negotiations would of course enhance

(The Secretary-General)

the prospects of achieving early and durable solutions. It was therefore to be hoped that others who had not yet done so would soon join the negotiations. It would be important to address as early as possible the critical outstanding differences regarding transitional arrangements that would inspire general confidence in the administration of the country, and the necessary mechanism for drafting a new constitution. Delays in reaching agreement on those matters would only increase the threat emanating from those opposed to the democratic transformation of the country.

17. Persisting political violence and major socio-economic problems continued to endanger the process and required an effective response. Such a response would build confidence in the current negotiations and would be crucial to the success of national reconstruction. In that context, a number of specific suggestions had been made by his distinguished predecessor in his last report to the General Assembly.

18. All those who were or had been involved in the historic process of seeking to eradicate apartheid were arriving at the end of a long night, but still faced arduous days ahead. If the people of South Africa were to make a peaceful transition to a true democracy in their country, they must all proceed together with wisdom, imagination and generosity of spirit. The international community must be vigilant and respond appropriately to developments as they occurred. The Special Committee and he himself, in their respective and mutually supportive roles, had the important and challenging duty of providing advice and assistance during the difficult transition and beyond. The General Assembly had defined the scope of United Nations responsibilities and he was certain that the Organization would continue to support that critical process effectively.

GENERAL STATEMENTS

19. The CHAIRMAN said that 1991 had been a remarkable year for South Africa, when, despite continuing political violence and setbacks, the process of change had remained on course. It had culminated in the launching of CODESA, which was a constructive beginning for the difficult negotiations ahead. It was hoped that 1992 would see further important developments and that the Special Committee would be able to increase its contribution to the ongoing process of change in South Africa.

20. The main thrust of the Special Committee's agenda had been outlined in the resolution on its programme of work and in the consensus and other resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on 13 December 1991. It was now up to the Special Committee to implement those decisions. During the debate on apartheid in December 1991, the Member States had welcomed the political advances made in South Africa, particularly the launching of CODESA, but had been concerned at the persistence of violence and serious socio-economic inequalities, which might jeopardize the achievement of a peaceful settlement.

(The Chairman)

21. Member States had supported the concept of a phased application of pressure, as warranted by developments, and the need for greater assistance for disadvantaged South Africans, as reflected in the consensus omnibus resolution on international efforts towards the total eradication of apartheid and support for the establishment of a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa. It was also thought appropriate to resume certain cultural, academic and sporting links, as part of the so-called "people to people" contacts. In the view of the Special Committee, such links should be encouraged if they were helpful to the eradication of apartheid and supportive of the emerging democratic, non-racial culture of the country. However, artists and scientists should still exercise caution and first consult with non-racial democratic organizations, while sporting links could be resumed with unified non-racial sporting organizations, as stipulated in the resolution.

22. The policy of a phased application of pressure was designed to maintain a leverage on the South African authorities, while also providing a basis for acknowledging changes as they occurred. However, the decision to remove some restrictions should not be seen as a green light for Member States or organizations to engage in fully-fledged economic relations with South Africa, thereby undermining that political leverage and obstructing, rather than encouraging, positive developments.

23. The restrictions on trade and investment should be maintained until transitional arrangements were in place inspiring general confidence in the administration of the country, while financial sanctions, which had played a major role, should remain until a transitional authority called for their lifting. Oil and arms restrictions were also crucial and should not be removed until the final stage of the transitional process, once a new constitution had been adopted and a democratically elected Government installed.

24. The lifting of restrictions not mentioned in the resolutions, such as air links, tourism, visas and consular relations, should be seen in the context of the phased lifting of sanctions and the Special Committee would be in a better position to give its views on the matter, if CODESA were able to make substantial progress in the months to come.

25. The establishment of CODESA during 1991 had been of historic importance and had in many ways fulfilled the long-standing demand for a meeting of all concerned parties. The positive attitude displayed and the prevailing atmosphere of political dialogue augured well for the future. Although the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) had decided not to attend CODESA, it was hoped that, following the unity forged at the Patriotic/United Front conference, all parties would be able to join CODESA in the near future.

26. One of the main factors jeopardizing progress in South Africa was the persistence of political violence and the apparent inability or unwillingness of the authorities to bring it under control. Of particular concern was the emerging evidence of involvement by the security forces in the violence,

(The Chairman)

through a series of illegal and unconstitutional mechanisms. It was to be hoped that the Goldstone Commission would pursue the matter vigorously and make appropriate and effective recommendations.

27. Although a growing consensus was emerging among the major parties on the basic principles for a future constitution, there were substantial differences over such fundamental issues as the future and duration of transitional arrangements and the body to be responsible for drafting a new constitution. While the authorities appeared to recognize the need for interim arrangements and for an elected body to draft the constitution, their proposal concerning referendums and interim parliaments was both perplexing and dangerous, since it would give the white minority a veto over the process.

28. While recognizing that CODESA on its own could not deliver democracy, the Special Committee firmly believed that the Convention should be based on democratic principles and its decisions fully implemented; it would continue to urge all those who had not done so to join.

29. The Special Committee would also continue to consult regularly both with the parties concerned in South Africa and with the relevant international governmental and non-governmental organizations. In that context, the usual format for solidarity days would be modified in 1992 and round-table discussions would be held with South Africans on relevant subjects, aimed at acquiring a better understanding of events in the country.

30. The Special Committee's programme had taken account of all the complex elements and was flexible enough to enable it to respond to ever-changing circumstances. Particular attention would be given to factors likely to jeopardize the process, such as the underlying causes of violence, and efforts would be made to ensure the effective implementation of agreements reached by the negotiating parties, such as the National Peace Accord. In that connection, the hearings to be held during the first half of 1992 on conditions for the internal peace process would be useful. Another area of concern was the needs of released political prisoners and returning exiles and a round table would be held on that subject. Human rights were also an important issue and the Special Committee would hold a workshop on the subject in cooperation with the United Nations Centre for Human Rights, at a venue to be determined in the light of future developments.

31. As the worsening economic prospects of the majority of South Africans threatened to erode their confidence in the positive outcome of negotiations, the Special Committee would continue to stress the urgent need to adopt a comprehensive national programme to assist the disadvantaged sectors of the South African population. The Committee planned to sponsor a meeting on the future role of the United Nations system in helping to address critical social and economic problems in South Africa. The meeting, which was scheduled to take place at Windhoek in April 1992, would provide an opportunity for senior representatives of United Nations agencies and prominent South Africans to

(The Chairman)

identify areas in which the United Nations system might be helpful in alleviating pressing needs of the majority of the South African population.

32. In May 1992, the Special Committee, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational and Training Programme for South Africa, would organize a follow-up meeting to the International Conference on the Educational Needs of the Victims of Apartheid in South Africa, held in Paris in 1991 in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Committee would also convene a round table with South African business and labour representatives in order to obtain a clearer picture of the distortions that characterized the South African economy and labour market. Another round table, on issues of women and children and the building of a non-sexist society in South Africa, would enable the Committee to focus its attention on sectors of the population that were at a particular disadvantage and whose contribution was essential to the future of a democratic South Africa.

33. The situation in South Africa had finally begun to change for the better, and the Special Committee could rightfully take heart from the progress achieved so far. The Committee should not, however, let down its guard. If the European Community's recent lifting of trade sanctions against South Africa was a harbinger of the international response to developments in South Africa, the Committee would have a difficult task ahead.

34. Mr. ACHARYA (Nepal) congratulated the Chairman on his re-election, which reflected Nigeria's deep commitment to the South African people's just struggle against apartheid. He considered his own re-election as Vice-Chairman as recognition of his country's resolute support of the oppressed people of South Africa.

35. Since the historic adoption in 1989 of the Declaration on Apartheid and its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa, profound changes had taken place in South Africa that could transform it into a united, democratic and non-racial society. The lifting of the ban on political parties, the repeal of the major legal pillars of apartheid, and the holding of peace talks between the Pretoria regime and major political parties to end the deplorable spate of violence had been extremely important events. Despite recurrent violence, the decision by some 20 political parties to initiate negotiations to determine procedural issues for convening CODESA had been a positive step towards the eradication of apartheid in South Africa.

36. At a time when the process of dismantling apartheid through negotiations had reached a new and critical stage, his delegation believed that any random lifting of sanctions would be highly premature and counter-productive. The international community should therefore continue to maintain phased economic sanctions in South Africa until the adoption of a new democratic constitution acceptable to all the peoples of South Africa.

37. Mr. OUDOVENKO (Ukraine) congratulated the Chairman on his unanimous re-election. The leadership of so competent a Chairman had immeasurably increased the Special Committee's prestige. As a result of its thorough analysis of the processes taking place in South Africa and of the reactions of various countries, the Committee had been able to adopt a constructive and flexible policy that had led to the adoption of the 1989 Declaration on Apartheid, as well as a number of General Assembly resolutions on the subject.

38. He also wished to pay tribute to the outstanding role of the Centre against Apartheid and, in particular, to the valuable contributions made by Mr. Mousouris during his term as Assistant Secretary-General for the Centre.

39. Lastly, he said that for the past seven years he had participated actively in the work of the Special Committee, and his only regret was that he had not witnessed the Committee's final victory over the odious system of apartheid. In the last months of his service in the United Nations, he had had the honour to represent a free, independent and democratic Ukraine, which would continue to work towards the elimination of apartheid in South Africa.

40. Mr. GOEL (India) thanked the Special Committee for re-electing him unanimously. He commended the extremely valuable work of the Centre against Apartheid, which had amassed a comprehensive pool of information on developments in South Africa and had guided the international community in its efforts to put an end to apartheid.

41. Mr. MAKHANDA (Observer, Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC)) congratulated the Secretary-General on his unanimous election. The Secretary-General was well known for his staunch support of the South African people's struggle against apartheid, and PAC was confident that he would witness the final victory of that struggle.

42. The Pan Africanist Congress continued to support a peaceful solution of the situation in South Africa through contacts with the regime and all its apologists. It was, however, opposed to the establishment of the Convention on a Democratic South Africa, (CODESA). The idea of such a forum had been put forward in the 1960s and had been rejected by the South African people, just as CODESA was being rejected now. A few weeks earlier, the South African Council of Churches, which represented 96 per cent of the South African people, had raised concerns about the legitimacy of CODESA as an organ for preparing a constitution that could galvanize national unity and stability in South Africa. That position had been embraced by the majority of the South African people who were seeking peace.

43. The Pan Africanist Congress abhorred violence and was doing all it could to ensure the establishment of an independent and impartial commission to investigate the deaths of South Africans at the hands of those who professed to be working for peace but who refused to submit to an impartial international commission. PAC would never participate in any of the so-called commissions established by the Pretoria regime, whose findings had always been

(Mr. Makhanda, Observer, PAC)

suppressed. PAC would not stand idly by while its people were killed. The issue must be resolved peacefully through an election open to both the black and white populations of South Africa.

44. Mr. MUKLUMBELA (Observer, African National Congress of South Africa (ANC)) said that, since the beginning of the year, many changes had taken place in South Africa. The Pretoria regime had recognized that the body to draw up a constitution should be democratically elected and that there should be an interim arrangement to oversee the transition of South Africa to a democracy. However, ANC believed that negotiations would not be easy, since the process would have to address the entire South African population, which had been a victim of both black and white apartheid. It would also be necessary to alleviate the fears of the white community in order to achieve a peaceful solution. If that was not done, South Africa would continue to be racked by turmoil and violence.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.